

THE SOWER

HV
5296
W83

JOHN G. WOOLLEY.



Class _____

Book _____

THE EDWIN C. DINWIDDIE
COLLECTION OF BOOKS ON
TEMPERANCE AND ALLIED SUBJECTS
(PRESENTED BY MRS. DINWIDDIE)

E. C. DINWIDDIE,



THE SOWER

BY

JOHN G. WOOLLEY



THE CHURCH PRESS

CHICAGO, U. S. A.

HV5296
.W83

COPYRIGHT, 1898
BY THE CHURCH PRESS
CHICAGO

Gift
MRS. Edwin C. Dinwiddie
Aug. 6. 1935

3 ap 76



THE SOWER.

CHAPTER I

EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES.

"If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in a spirit of meekness, lest ye also be tempted."

*

JUDGE USAGE holds that every ratiocination taken, "in print," *flagrante delictu*. shall be permitted—as a matter of common mercy—to answer the question; "Have you anything to say, why sentence of death should not now be pronounced upon you?"

*

As a rule, what the prisoner says, makes no difference. Nevertheless, it might; and therefore comes now the defendant with stiffish confidence in the upshot, and avers that, as a little sermon, in which character it has often appeared in 1846-

lic on the stage, it needed no apology, and that, there are others ready to verify.

*

Nor needs one now, perhaps, but at a venture plugs a picked argument or two, like oakum, into the judicial pause, not so much to affect impending judgment, as, like a true fanatic, to prevent even the slightest leak of opportunity, and incidentally, to put itself at ease in these new clothes; lose if it can, the self-consciousness of types and binding and regain the composure of its aforetime decent patches and homespun, as many a humble gospeler before, has felt constrained to do, when publishing a tall, refulgent hat which some benevolent but inartistic friend has given him, to "cross match" with an apocalyptic coat, and trousers according to the "higher criticism."

*

So, gentle criticiser, please to understand that this is a tract, and nothing but a tract, innocent of literary design or even aspiration, having dropped into printer's ink, as Mr. Wegg, of fragrant memory, into poetry—as it were, "unbe-

knownst"—from a lead pencil which travels fifty thousand miles a year with a busy, irregular unsatisfactory man who has neither time nor talent for writing books, nor any ambition but to bring about a head-on-collision between the church and the saloon—and be in it.

*

Whatever of ill-will or ill-desert this book may be allowed, it cannot be denied that the writer of it parts with positive value when it leaves his hand. And thereby hangs a touch of history personal to him but germane to this apology, to-wit:

*

Ten years ago, with a vision of the situation that was most accurate—not to say prophetic, as the event has shown, having “blown in,” his lusty youth, as the coarse but expressive slang has it, he “staked” his battered but clean prime, to lose in The Great Reform. And he has played, and lost regularly, not always patiently, not always wisely, but “on the dead square” with all his heart and mind and strength—without a whine.

And today—January thirty-first, A. D.,

1898—is the darkest, blue-black Monday of the five hundred and twenty one, if he counts surface indications or considers his own ease or his own fame.

The saloon is in the saddle, and the voting church stands courtseying like an expectant flunkey at its stirrup.

*

When Paul was stricken down on the Damascus road and called to take a great apostleship, God sent him to no seminary, but to a lowly man to learn the way of life and truth and victory. So, it seems, he does to lesser men, for lesser parts, this writer with the rest.

*

Straight through these cruel years his stay and counselor and guide has been not "Moses and the prophets," nor even the anointed one in whose great name and for whose gentle sake all modern good consists; but the obscurest man that ever had a line of "honorable mention" in the world.

*

him, Saint nobody, the Messiah of the clods, this pamphlet celebrates.

Many a time, in deadly weariness of soul

and body, the writer has dragged himself before an audience of Christian men whose faces were as arctic as the polar sea, to try to thaw them with his rush-light. And then, instead of arguing anything or any pleading, has read to them between the sacred lines, the story of a lowly hero, and the while watched their faces soften into tolerance or even smiles while his own heart postponed breaking, sine die. Such-wise now, of course, the story's usefulness ends at the printing office. That is the author's sacrifice—and no little.

*

And on the other hand, so many letters in cramped, toil-stiffened hand, have come to thank him for the story; so many flagging hearts have quickened by it, he is told; that he is willing to forego the oral narrative hereafter and send the printed version broadcast to the whole fellowship of those who strive, and seem to fail.

*

Howbeit, let there be confessed a modicum of pathetic and forgivable pride—and a desire to celebrate himself—for that, at the end of a decade of amazed

and progressively hopeless discouragement he is yet willing, like an old dog, torn and winded in a chase that failed, to poke an inglorious muzzle into the dangling palm of the Church and make another ten years run for her, though all her keepers would drive him from the hunt with sneers and blows.

CHAPTER II.

KEY OF E.

"He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again, bringing his sheaves with him."

A BOOK dedicates itself to the hearts it touches or the hands it moves, regardless of authorial predestination, just as a note of music flies straight to the tone—fellow of its own wave-length—nilly willy the player; and as a tired honey bee hums in the Key of "E"—but hums—so, this voice from a field, worn, thin and small, and tired--just the same as if it were fresh and strong and beautiful—sends a passing cheer to every "E" life on the straight and narrow way:



Editors, who, watching their newspapers in anxious nights, have seen "His star in the east and followed it"—only to have their mail diminish and their friends grow cold; while the sleek sewage peddlers and whisky advertisers they

compete with for a hearing, grow rich and popular and influential;

*

Teachers, who, sitting at His feet, have gotten a preparation that apparently unfits them to hold their own with the crude boordom that has "a pull;"

*

Students, who, for His sake, have purposed in their hearts that they will not defile themselves with the club's wine, only to see themselves outstripped in social ways by the unclean scoffers at virtue or abstinence in man or woman-kind;

*

Doctors, who, having laid their gifts upon His altar, have gone forth to walk in the dust of honesty and dignity and modesty, only to see the Quack drive by them on the race course of the world;

*

Pastors, who, surrendering to the truth have lost their turn in the line of promotion and seen the great church doors swing shut against them, their children's chances in the world diminished for want of opportunities that come in

crowds to toadies and agreeable gluttons,
and their sweet-faced wives bleaching out
in the cellar air of failure, year by year;

*

Mothers of children, poisoned from
their father's loins, who have done
their best—and miserably failed—to fight
off the black heredity and win what is
their own by every syllable of justice in
the world;

*

Citizens who have knelt to Him and
sworn "to be His man from that day
forth with life and limb and earthly honor,"
only to find themselves compelled to
train in ragged minorities with uncongenial
and unlovely company—to go uncounted
in the civic battles, and cut no figure
but for ridicule. To these and such
as these, this fragment of biography is
given with a brother's greeting, and something
like a prayer.

CHAPTER III.

OUI BONO?

"A sower went forth to sow."

THAT is not the text, but the whole story
—a five-act tragedy with a clown in
the leading role—*solus*.

*

IT is a hopeless history if ever there was
one; an indefinite article with the commonest of nouns, subject of an intransitive predicate, vanishing at length in a rural infinitive.

Personnel never appeared to less advantage; travel never offered smaller comfort; incident never sunk to deeper poverty.

But there is method in this meanness, and if you care to learn the secret of this dreary man, you must at the outset see him where he is;—

CHAPTER IV.

LOCUS IN QUO.

"Whereunto ye do well that ye take heed as unto a light that shineth in a dark place."

A DULL, flat, uninteresting landscape without dimensions, distance, foreground, color, mountains, sky—without anything to speak of. One man's patch—an expressionless pancake of a field, lumpy with outcropping boulders between wild briars rooting at their branch-ends and crawling out like giant vegetable spiders into the open—a winding roadway fringed with wire-grass lurking among stagnant pools of yellow water, beating about the bush, rutted and spiritless, leading nowhere, anywhere, everywhere.

*

S ignal service" weather! Variable winds—east, shifting to north, south and west—showery with drought, in the morning—oppressive heat in the evening with frost—milder—cold, warm—fair!

In the midst, a man, with wooden shoes—
or none—and shabby clothes—with a
bag slung to his neck, striding back and
forth through thorns and sand and shrubs
and rocks, step by step, handful by hand-
ful, sowing—the moon wrong side up, all
the planets of bad luck in conjunction,
rows of neighbors on the stump fence
laughing at him, gulls, in clouds, following
him with mis-fit wings and idiotic little
squeak, eating the grain at his heels—
a full “crop” for every bird; for him,
“the patience of hope” and “the bag to
hold”—walking. Give him—and welcome—
of the fruit of his own hands and let his
works praise him in the gate—of the luna-
tic asylum!

This man is not worth while save that
his very brute faith and stalwart density
to difficulties, raise a suspicion that he
may be somewhat other than he seems.

*

One peril is spared him—vanity. He
need not labor to keep from being
vain. His occupation is conducive other-
wise. In that respect he is a live reform-
er. Of such, only the dead—if they—hear
flattery. If he had bethought him to en-

large his operations by organizing that endeavor into a stock company, the shares would have been hard to float at any price.

A speculator would have received him with derision or contempt, an investor would have been politer maybe, but as far from buying. And even farmers whose very life depended on the seed they sowed from year to year, would have found endless objection:

One might have said: "I, myself, am a husbandman, and of course, believe in sowing seed. I sympathize "with all wise and well-regulated" efforts for the increase of the acreage and the encouragement of early planting, but this land is not fit to farm, and you are forcing the season! The conditions are not right; there was frost last night, and if it clears off there will be more tonight! It is the wrong time of the moon. The neighbors are scandalized! It is of no use to sow in advance of public sentiment! You are wasting your seed! You are throwing your strength away! See how long you have been sowing and not a spear has shown above the ground!

"Stop! dig up some kernels and see if

they have germinated, and if any have, I will consider the venture more favorably! Or if you will wait until you can actually show a standing crop, you may send for me! In fact, you will not need to send for me: I shall be here, then. I am as good a sower as you are, but I cannot afford to lose my seed!"

If any had joined him in the enterprise it would have been people like himself having great faith in God that He will give the increase, faith in the seed that it will grow, faith in themselves that they have heard aright, all, with humility—strength to wait, or even fail.

Humility is the drag of the bag of seed on the neck of the sower, earthward—*hu-nus*-ward. Vanity is the upward tilt of the chin when the sower's bag is empty—*vano*-ty—the "smoothest" diplomat of the kingdom of darkness.

CHAPTER V.

"Before honor is humility."

CHRISTIAN work is anti-vanity. The meekest soldier of the kingdom will occasionally ship a spiritual plume or two and be a Yankee Doodle disciple, for a little, as his heart dreams over some splendid bit of jetsam he has dragged out of the teeth of the sea—some drunkard perhaps whom he has snatched from the saloon, and gotten pointed back to his father's house, or some fallen girl brought back to hope and truth by his own effort.

But about the time that he begins to exult over the conscious amplitude of his faith and skill and power and to think of himself as a light house and a bell buoy and a life boat and a crew and a captain and a compass and a nautical almanac, all combined, pop goes his importance like a Prince Rupert's drop—his girl has slipped back into the whirlpool, his drunkard has gone jeering and cursing back to the drink and the gutter, leaving him nothing

for his pains but some rags and lies, and oaths—the vermin of language; and a dull pain at his heart quotes scripture to him, saying: “A sower went forth to *sow*.” And he takes up again the inelastic plodding of a simple sower, content, if as he trudges on he may see along his way the waving fruits of other peoples’s sowing when his own poor field can boast not one green spear of bursting promise, and happy even if he can keep his heart quiet enough to sing in it an inaudible second to the song of distant reapers bringing in their sheaves at harvest home.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MAN.

"Let every man abide in the place wherein he is found."

IF the place was unpromising the man was no better—wherein is food for reflection. There is a plague of "soft snap" hunters in the church. The reformer hears nothing more frequently than friendly criticism, this wise: You are all right in the abstract, but conditions are against you! You are premature! When my vote will kill the saloon it shall be cast to kill it! Which is, by interpretation: when that which is good is easy, cleave to it; when it is hard, wait for something to turn up!

*

And there is a plague, also, of tuft hunters, as who should say: Your cause is right, but your workers are such lowly folk! You have no distinguished men and women! When the great turn to you, so will we!

But the need of the world is not so much great men, as true men; whose word is good, men whose sons dare follow them, men whose paths are straight.

*

It does not take a very great man to be true to wife and children and home! It does not take a great bishop to abide by a declaration which he has signed with his own hand! Truth in the inward parts is the desire of the church and the lack of it her deadly weakness.

*

This man was lowly, but he was true. He was only a sower, but he faced that fact and did his level best. That takes truth.

There was a touch of heroism, or stupidity—they look very like sometimes—in the boy who, when asked about the breed of his puppy, had the courage or the simplicity to say, “just dog!”

This man was not much, but what he was, he was. That is “the secret of the Lord,” or close to it.

The weakness and unfaithfulness of most people come of trying to be somebody else or somewhat else.

The temptation is most natural and almost excusable, the faculty of imitation is so large in all of us, and this man probably did not escape it. Doubtless he would have liked to be "somebody"—a drum major with a bear skin hat and a brass baton—a troubadour with a guitar and a cloak—a crusader on a bow-necked horse cavorting toward the holy sepulchre—a preacher, an editor, a "favorite son" an "advance agent of prosperity," a "boy orator," or chairman of something.

*

But he weighed himself to a fraction—agreed to the limitations of his gifts, accepted the humility of his calling, took his place as a private in the rear rank, but caught the step and kept it.

*

A little girl, away from home on a visit, learned a new game: it was called heaven. On her return she introduced it to her playmates, and, assigning the characters, said to one of them: "Mary, you can be an angel," and was proceeding with the cast, when Mary, pouting, interrupted the proceedings to

declare that, unless she could be God, she would not play heaven.

*

The church is full of that. So many fairly willing workers strain themselves to the point of uselessness, stretching up to things that are too high for them: If I were our pastor, I should preach better sermons! If I were an orator I should thunder for the great reforms! If I were rich, I should pour wealth into the work of rescue! If I had social prestige, my home should give out health continually! If I were the superintendent, we should have better order! If I were on the committee the program would have been more interesting! "If I"—"If I"—It is really two "I's" with a doubt between them and the result is precious near nothing at all. For none of us is some other, and the vital condition of service in any place at any time, is to be our own most potent selves.

*

There is something positively pathetic in that indefinite article "a." That fetches the subject down to "bed rock." If it were only "the," we might lift him up

a trifle at any rate in imagination, as one does the tradesman whose signs upon the fences by the roadside describe him as "the druggist" et cetera, and think of him as "head sower" in that locality or something, certainly, above the common herd. But he is denied—and that, by inspiration—the incalculably small distinction of the definite article. Lower, it is impossible to go, on a farm. "A sower."

*

What was his name? Let us not make fun of him; he had no name. What wages did he get? None by this record. Whose farm was it? Nobody's. Certainly not his, or he would have been named in the story. Where did he live? Nowhere! What tribe was his—what sect—what party? None. What was his creed? Nothing to speak of. Who loved him? Who appreciated? Who cheered? Nobody. He was Nobody of Nowhere, and by even such plodding, unromantic men as he this world is to be won in toil, discouragement, frost and heartache.

So, it was a hard place; The man was commonplace to the last degree, but he was true. There was method in his mediocrity and his conduct was unique from start to finish.

CHAPTER VII.

WAYS AND MEANS.

I N the first place he "went" and that is more important than at first glance it seems.

You cannot tell much about a horse, or a man, until you see him go.

If you were intending to buy a horse you might be shown one shut in a box stall, knee deep in clean straw, with a light blanket curcingle over him—with eyelets to see through; his mane and tail done up in curl papers, his legs bandaged with flannel bandages, his hoofs blackened with oil and tar and packed with sawdust or oil meal. That is a good place and a good way to keep a horse, but a bad way to buy one.

*

I f a general survey under such conditions had impressed you favorably to buying, you would say to the seller assuming you to have what is called horse sense: "Lead him out! Let me see how the sun-light

strikes his eyes when he first comes out of the dark stall! Let me examine his teeth and his coat where I can see! Take the blanket off! Take the hairpins from his mane and tail, and let me see the hang of them! Remove the bandages and let me run him over for puffs, and windgalls, and splints and spavins and ring bones and curbs and stifles and scratches? Throw the harness on him! Bridle him! Hitch him up! Let me see him "back!" Let me see if he will stand quiet while I get in the wagon! Give me the reins. Let me feel his mouth! Let me see if he takes the bit evenly or hogs it on one side and takes the road crossways! Let me drive him for an hour at a good clip and see how he breathes! Let me hitch him to half a ton of rock and see if I should probably get back if I were away from home with him and the road should get heavy, or I should strike a bit of corduroy or sand! Let me drive him up to the electric car! Let me raise an umbrella behind him and see if he understands!

"Let me hitch him to a post and see if he will stand hitched! Let me drive him through the water and wash the paint from his

hoofs and then look for quarter cracks! Let me trot him over the cobble stones and beat the packing out of his feet and see what kind of frog pressure he shows then, or what signs of pricks or corns!"

*

It is the road that tells on a horse. You cannot trust to the stable or the groom or the seller, or the points or the looks. The horse market is full of "fine lookers" that cannot go. They have fine style, "gentle as kittens." "Any lady can drive them." They stretch their necks and snort, and beg to be speeded. They look as if they could make a mile in two minutes or less. They paw, and toss their manes—and at the end of the first mile their knees go over, their feet give out, or their wind thickens.

*

Men are like that. The church is full of "fine lookers" who cannot go. Fine coat, fine hair, small feet, small ears, good nose, good teeth, good color, good style, good feeders, good disposition. Who stamp the carpet in pulpit and in pew, until the dust flies. Who stretch their hands toward the saloon and beg: "Let me at

it!" Who cry aloud and spare not—words. Who pass rousing resolutions, and refuse to be quiet. But who, when they take the road upon election day, groan and wheeze and swell and cramp and heave and limp and lie down at the door of the saloon.

*

How many a minister exhibits all the points—theological and other, except "roading!" His neck is clothed with thunder and he scents the battle afar off—so far off, that he cannot reach it until the day after.

*

If you ever want to buy a Christian, do not buy him on Sunday! Let judgment begin at the house of God, but let it also continue out of doors. If one had come from another world to this, on a tour of inspection, arriving at, say, Brooklyn, the city of churches, on the Sabbath before election in the last presidential year, and had attended divine service and noted the solid men who composed a decimal fraction of the audiences and how they went through the manual of public worship with invocation, hymn, psalm, scripture lesson, liturgy, *et cetera*, and had spent

the intervals between meetings going about the streets and hotel corridors where men indeed were in the majority,—such men! by comparison with those who call themselves Christians, and had been told that of the whole country's voting strength about fifty three per cent were estimated to be Christians, and had seen the saloon at its work of disease, debauch, dishonor, death, and been fully informed as to the constant nature and statistics of it and of not only the implied hostility of the church but also its express and world-filling declaration of war against it, and that the question of the continuation of the saloon as an institution and a source of revenue was among other things to be submitted to the people on the following Tuesday; he might have supposed that he could safely stake his existence on the outcome. And had he in indignant honor, as a citizen of the universe, been moved to speak to the saloon, he would have said: "Gorge yourself, monster! Root, hog, your accursed snout into the bosom of innocence and tear it! Rip up with your tusks the womb of motherhood! Crunch childhood's bones and set your

split hoof on a nation's brain! Drop your damnable litter at the church door for one more day! But Tuesday, you shall die the death as sure as men are brave and strong and true; for Jesus' friends have said it! Boast not of your gold and silver. If all the precious metals of all the hills of great America were wrung out, as one may wring the water from a rag, and offered to these men of God, one hours' ransom for your unspeakable blood guiltiness, they would answer only with a blow."

*

But, alas! Those of us who knew this country, understood full well through all that Tuesday when the sons of God were gathered together at the polls, that the saloon would be there also, and be there in command of church and state, cowing Christians with threats of panic, buying Christians with gold and silver and precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, skins, ribbons, tin, tacks, twine—as daring traders put in fear, tempt, purchase savage men, with guns and glass beads and paint and looking glasses.

And it was so. Blind justice sick to

death, put forth her hand to bless the election day, and said: "The hand is the hand of the Church, but the voice is the voice of the Saloon."



Do not employ a minister on Sunday! Many a minister speaks like a hero over the big official Bible who whispers like a fugitive from justice at the polls. Many a one thinks like a God in the sacred desk, who maunders like an idiot in the election.



If you are looking for a minister, and I know of one who can be had, and go to hear him and he seems to suit—seems to possess the qualities which please you—style, action, speed, wind; if you continue in the "horse-sense" aforesaid, you will say to those who are willing reluctantly to part with him: "Lead him out! Let me see him without his robes! Let me see his eyes when he comes out of the dim funereal light of the stained glass windows! Unbandage the limbs of his manhood, and let me see him walk! Loosen the "overdraw" of dogma and let me see him drink from the open stream at his

feet! Let me raise a Sunday truth behind him on Tuesday and see if he recognizes it!

"Let me throw a party newspaper in front of him and see if he "turns out!" He seems to be shod with the preparation of the gospel all right as one looks at his patent leather shoes, but let him go over the cobble stones of a hard campaign hitched to an unpopular reform and beat the packing out of his hoofs and then see what kind of frog pressure he exhibits or signs of corns, or quarter cracks, or tender heels! Let me hitch him to a church resolution and see if he will stand hitched! Let me drive him up to the prohibition party and see if he shies!"

The hero of this biography was no more a sower than a *goer*.

CHAPTER VIII.

VERBUM SAT.

HE "went." The verb is in the active voice, and the indicative mode, intransitive, third person, singular, and is such a crisp and satisfying monosyllable! The bones of it—the consonants—nasal at first and then so dental that you can fairly see teeth in it, suggest the appropriate adverbs, and it grips the sense like an automatic air brake. He went voluntarily. He was no conscript; no driver curled his lash over him and drove him into the field. No martinet cursed him and forced him to play the man. One of the pitiful phenomena of Christian discipleship today, is that in their civic life, men wait to be led or driven to their duty. The great bulk of Christian men in our country would hail with enthusiasm any event which would force them into open war against the saloon. They have Christianity and patriotism, but both of such poor temper as to wait to be drafted. Yet they are trustwor-

thy, almost to a man—once they shall have been mustered in and mobilized. The history of prohibition may be written in three words some day by some laconic writer: "The Church *went*."

CHAPTER IX.

SYNTAX.

"For every man shalt bear his own burden."

A VERB must agree with its subject in number and person.

He went alone—one man and not much of a man at that. Where were the neighbors? Never mind; that is another history.

*

It seems to be the hardest lesson of Christianity that the chrism is a separator.

*

The first condition of service is to stand alone, locomotion before that, is empty staggering. No pastor can lead his flock to higher fields until he, in his sole selfhood, unattended, has walked the way and camped upon the spot and planted his colors on its highest ground.

*

No statesman can achieve a law or push a great reform to power, until in his

own heart and mind he has cut his way through opposition and from the lookout of his personal victory beckons the people to come on.

*

The best that can be said of the gregarious reformer, is that he follows, weakly and far to the rear, some lonely grenadier of truth, who has refused to be included in a job-lot, official surrender, and struck out alone to conquer or to die, afraid of nothing—ashamed of nothing—as much a man as if there were no other in the world.

*

No man is fit to teach society, until he is willing to be a hermit for the sake of truth.

*

There can never be Christian socialism, save by consecrated individualism blent in the righteousness of social forms.

*

No life can be trusted to be true in company, until it is strong enough to be true alone.

CHAPTER X.

WHO?

"Every man's work shall be made manifest."

He—himself—Theory and practice consolidated! Capital and labor reconciled! He sent no hired man. He was no landlord. What a funny Grand Army of the Republic it would be if the men who sent substitutes to the war, were to organize.

*

Let it be conceded that his was not the pleasantest way to farm; *via* sweat, blisters, chafes, and patches, is not hilarious in prospect nor picturesque historically. But it is written so.

*

Obiter.

ONCE there was a man who lived in a city and practiced law. He had many clients and income not a little. He had a farm upon the shore of a beautiful lake, but did not live upon it. His servants

lived there. It was stocked with trotting horses, coach horses and thoroughbreds, Jersey cattle at seven hundred dollars a head, Shropshire sheep at fifty dollars a lamb, Poland China pigs at forty dollars a shoat, Bronze turkeys at twenty-five dollars a bird, Pekin ducks at ten dollars a pair. He bought eggs at a dollar apiece to "set" under common fowls.

Every Saturday when the weather was fine, he would drive to the farm to stay until Monday, and on Sunday he would "farm." He would take his whole family to the pig pen and lean across the low fence to rub the little pigs with a wisp of straw until they should lie down—so cunning! And he would "farm" the stable by giving lumps of sugar to the horses—and hunt the eggs and tame the lambs—and launch the ducks upon the lake to see them swim; and he thought he had never known so delightful a business as "farming." He boasted that his family depended on no grocer for their butter, which, indeed, was true—and "dear," for what he had, cost probably not less than fifty dollars a pound the year round.

But the butter was superfine and every-

thing about the business was super something, and in the end, the whole thing went—land and stock and poultry—as part payment for the investment. Creditors took everything but the man's experience and he was like the boy that twisted the little mule's tail—not so proud, but brighter, ever after.

*

The "nice" way to farm, is to have a man to sweat for you, while you swing in a hammock in duck trowsers and a blazer with a book and a fan, drinking buttermilk through straws and seeing labor through verdurous boughs.

*

But that is not the profitable way. The ambition to be a gentleman-farmer is expensive and in contradiction of the rule obtaining in more aristocratic mechanics involves loss of power and of speed as well.

CHAPTER XI.

"A POINTER."

"This, also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts "

FORTY years or more ago, McGuffey's Second Reader had a story in it, apropos. It was called "The Farmer and the Larks," and was substantially this: A meadow lark had nested in a field of wheat and raised a family. Before their wings had grown, the brood were thrown into a panic one day in the absence of the mother bird, by hearing the owner of the field examining the grain and speaking to his son about the harvesting. "This grain is ripe," he said, "and must be cut! Go therefore to our relatives across the valley and tell them it is so, and ask them to come to us and cut the grain."

*

When the old lark came home from her foraging in the evening and had heard the story, she quieted the young ones and tucked them—full stomached but still hungry into bed—saying in a

chirp—"We are in no danger yet."

*

And it was so.

The kinsfolk did not arrive, though duly notified, and the farmer was surprised and vexed, and came again inspecting, saying to his son, as they walked near the nest: "We must not wait on our relatives. Go quickly to our neighbors and ask them not to fail us on the morrow or we may lose the earnings of a year."

*

This, too, the tidy matron heard that night as the children, with their brown bibs, chattered over their worms, and said as cheerily as if she knew the farmers operations were but another "lark." "Oh, never mind," and in the morning smoothed out her yellow fichu and went out for the day.

*

But the neighbors failed, also, and the farmer raged at the unreliability of human kind and said loudly enough to be heard through their pin feathers if the larklings had been without ears: "We will reap it ourselves! Come on, boy, turn

the grindstone. We will sharpen our sickles and cut our own grain, and neighbors and relatives may do the like! Independence now and Independence forever!"—or words to that effect.

*

And precisely that came to pass. The next evening the wheat was in shock—but the birds were safe in the copse beyond, for even a lark knows that when a man resolves to do his own work, it will be done.

*

Men, women and birds! Hear the gospel and heed it! If you want anything done, do it. If you would maintain your business credit and get on, keep your eye on it and your hand as far as you can!

If you want your house kept in order, see to it! No servant will do it as well—not many will do it at all, otherwise. Riches and "help" and "a long head for planning" (and that last, I think must be universally present in the feminine gender, for I have heard so many women confess it) never yet—or rarely—"kept house" mistressless.

The front stoop and the hall rug, and the parlor may prosper in hired hands, but it would touch the heart and other sensitive viscera of the most obdurate man, to see the condition of orphaned back-stairs and pantries and pots and pans.

*

The velvety lawn at the front has an awful back yard to match it, when the housewife sees to the one and the housemaid sees to the other.

*

If God has sent you a boy to raise, raise him yourself—or lose him! The preacher cannot do it for you, nor the governness, nor the kindergarten. If you have wealth and a carriage and ride in the park and carry a pug dog in your lap, while your nurse girl wheels your baby wearily up and down on the sidewalk in its perambulator, you need not wonder if the dog turns out better than the boy.

*

That is no idle jest. One of the most startling facts of rescue work is the large percentage of drunkards and failures that come out of Christian homes

and churches and Sunday schools. It is shocking, appalling; and one of the reasons is, that comparatively very few boys are shown how to live, by their own parents. There is almost no danger of a boy whose chum is his father, and the boy who learns life's delicate, difficult, dangerous elementary lessons from the lips of his mother, in the privacy and sacredness of his own home, will not be likely to bring up in the game bag of the saloon in later years.

*

I n civic life, the rule holds good, no less:
The vital work of citizenship cannot be done at second hand. To wait on others to prepare your ticket or settle your policy or declare your protest is to surrender your manhood and subvert your own kingdom.

Proxy is the slyest devil of the legion, and vice president of the church in the world.

CHAPTER XII.

THE PROXY CHURCH.

THE church is trying to save the world there is no doubt of it. But how? In general, this way:

Groups of good people form, perhaps a hundred strong on an average, and hire a pastor and induct him into the pulpit.

*

ON the first day he preaches, we are all there, and we look him over and his wife and children and pay our annual sum, and go home and stretch our comfortable limbs in easy chairs and say in pantomime: "Well, now, thank the Lord, we have a preacher settled in our church, and I have paid my stint for the year, and am at liberty to wash my hands of all active responsibility for twelve months! Let the minister save the country."

*

AND if the minister be a man of earnestness and power who does seem to start a ripple of salvation in the neigh-

borhood, we are not slow to recognize it nor to say complacently: "We are stirring things, we are doing a great work in our church" and we actually warm up to some personal effort by and by. Good effort, too, more or less, but "built upon the sand" of visible and comfortable prosperity, high percentages and rapid gains.

*

But the bulk of the Christ work of the world is void of "boom" or even visible increase and as a rule the preacher fails—sometimes because he is not fit to win, but usually for the historic reason that "the harvest is great and the laborers are few."

CHAPTER XIII.

"Study to show thyself approved unto God."

THERE can be absolutely nothing said adverse to the sundry "foreign missionary" undertakings, yet the fact stands up hard and bare and dry against the horizon, that no church in America is dealing worthily with its own vicinage. What with an overworked ministry and an over-fed and under-exercised laity, it is counted a prosperous society that "holds its own" from year to year, and one must travel far to find a church that is hated and feared by the vicious of its own neighborhood in business or in politics.

*

The reason of it, includes cowardice, venality, hypocrisy and many things unpleasant to speak of, but the evident, inclusive, compulsory diagnosis is in a word: "proxy."

*

The pastor is expected to preach two good fresh sermons each week and

deliver them without notes, conduct the mid-week meeting and keep it bright by pungent "talks"—more difficult to prepare than sermons, attend the young people's meeting and lead in prayer and fill any awkward pauses that occur, superintend the Sabbath School and teach the young men's Bible class, make the High School commencement oration every year in his own town or some other, speak a eulogy at the cemetery on Decoration Day, visit the sick, bury the dead, marry the marriageable, baptize the baptizable, search out the poor, see that the young women do not have progressive euchre parties, and that the young men do not drink or dance or go to races, collect money for the religious newspapers and forward it duly, attend the caucus of his party and see that the right men are nominated and after election to see that they enforce the law, be prepared to give a reason for the faith that is in him and to explain the absence of whatever faith is not in him, visit each of his parishioners once a year independent of any special reason, be ready at all times to advise upon all matters of life and immortality

and hold six weeks of special service annually beginning with the Week of Prayer, not to mention incidental duties not to be foreseen nor escaped.

*

If, in the despair of his endless and impossible task, he be constrained to straighten his personal conduct in politics and business, to the edge of the Word of God, he is called impractical. The influential member withdraws his support and the world the flesh and the politician take alarm. (?)

*

Which, of course, is not to be endured, and we say presently: "Well, this is a pretty kettle of fish—just when we were getting under way, too. What can have led Brother —— to make such a fool of himself? To be sure, he has hardly seemed the stuff for this town, from the first, but he had a great opportunity and has missed it. His usefulness is at an end here.

*

Then, his wife has been no help to him. Our last pastor's wife acted as her husband's assistant pastor without

salary, and did as much parish work as he did, but this woman seems to find it all she can do to keep her own house and her own children in order and help her husband in domestic feminine ways. It's a shame. He never ought to have married. He ought to resign."

*

And sooner or later he does resign, and takes his wife and children and his books and his sore heart to another field—preaching—or soliciting life insurance—or selling books—or getting up a club for a newspaper.

*

Wanted—A recipe for saving the world by proxy! That is the advertisement of the church today. And the thought carries failure in it all the way. We are self-sold slaves of professionalism and partyism and committeeism. We are trying to preacherize the world, instead of Christianize it.

*

That fails—ought to fail—will always fail. To say nothing of the quality of ministers, there are not enough of them to do what they are set to do, and if they were

of the requisite fineness, and if there were enough of them, yet it is not manly, honest, or Christian for you and me to hire a man to honor God and help the world in ways that we can personally use to greater good.

*

We ought to learn, must learn, this self-evident proposition, that the world is to be cleansed and saved, not by preachers or professional people of great or small degree, or "wide movements" suddenly or leagues, or clubs, or parties, but by the small fidelities of individual Christian living day by day, by you and you and you going out into the highways and harvest fields and work shops and jury boxes and caucuses and polling places, and innoculating the multitude with the virus of righteousness.

"The times and the seasons" are in His hands whose we are and whom we say we serve.

CHAPTER XIV.

"What is that to thee; follow thou Me."

THIS proxy service makes critics of us all—rather than Christians, and delays the kingdom.

The Spirit and habit of criticism is rampant in the church. Everybody seems to know precisely what the trouble is and precisely who is to blame, but it seems not to have occurred to many to look themselves over carefully, in the white light of truth, in search of flaws.

*

It would not be a bad idea to have an annual week of prayer for a great baptism of charity for one another—so that we might learn to do less of clawing at our friends who differ from us incidentally, and more straight out fighting against the common enemies of us all.

*

The greatest of reforms—"the temperance cause," as it is called—illustrates the situation, painfully. It's com-

plete victory waits for nothing but the exorcism of the proxy devil and his valet, Criticism—or more accurately, Hypocriticism.

*

You may have heard a woman before now holding forth to delighted audiences to the effect that the real secret of the hold of the saloon upon America is to be found in the bad cookery—that our mothers and wives and servants cook badly, which causes indigestion in the children and provokes the desire of stimulation in the men and creates the appetite for alcoholic drinks and a demand for the saloon.

*

Which may, indeed, have something in it. But meanwhile mayhap her own husband gets his meals at a restaurant, and her own children run the street, and she forgets that criticism and cookery—no less than charity—begin at home.

*

Or a good woman inveighing against the freedom or the carelessness of physicians in the use of alcoholic remedies in their prescriptions, a thing that

needs exploiting thoroughly. But meantime her own medicine chest being a little "bar" of tinctures, and cordials, and essences, and patent medicines which she has overlooked, forgetting that the most dangerous doctor in the world is the dosing mother.

*

Or an earnest pastor railing at the peril of sideboards—when his own altar rail is under the divine embargo: "touch not, taste not, handle not, the unclean thing."

*

Or a native American scolding at the drinking customs of the foreign immigrants — complacently maintaining, meantime, a quarter of a million dramshops set "to catch the poor."

*

Or a citizen complaining of official corruption high and low, all oblivious to the fact that by every principle of the law of agency, the corruption is as much his own as his right hand.

*

We need a new topographical survey of Christian duty, fixing the base line

not at our neighbor's righteousness, but at our own, and from that, working out our own salvation, neighborward.

*

Christendom is full of "prohibitionists" who chain off their civic piety from their neighbor's sin—who say * * "Just as good a prohibitionist as you are—but," or: "Whenever my vote will kill the liquor traffic, it is ready."

The fault with that is not that the measure is false, but that the "starting point" is afloat. One might as well attempt to calculate latitude and longitude from a wild goose.

*

And, strangely enough, these incalculably wrong brethren accuse us radicals of being impractical.

*

What, then, is "practical" Christianity in that behalf? Only this: Begin at your own lips, and "work out" to sideboard, pantry, medicine chest, altar, school district, precinct, ward, city ticket, county ticket, work it out! The order outward is not chronological but logical.

You do not stop at your town until you get it clean, and then advance upon the county and stop at that until it has been redeemed, and then move on to the state, and so forth.

*

But all these outworkings go on simultaneously up to the measure of opportunity. Your business is not to kill the saloon, but to "work out" salvation with all your might and all the time, until the last hard suggestion of the situation is, in the fine words of Matthew Arnold;

Creep into thy narrow bed,
Creep, and let no more be said!
Vain thine onset! All stands fast.
Thou, thyself, must break at last.
Let the long contention cease!
Geese are swans, and swans are geese!
Let them have it how they will,
Thou art tired: best be still.
They out-talked thee, kissed thee, loved thee:
Better men fared thus before thee:
Fired their ringing shot and passed,
Hotly charged—and sank at last.
Charge once more, then, and be dumb!
Let the victors, when they come,
When the forts of folly fall,
Find thy body by the wall.

CHAPTER XV.

QUID PRO QUO.

"When thou sawedst a thief, thou consentedst with him."

THE drink seller's only argument is: "Men have drunk always and will always drink, therefore, there must be saloons. Go to! Let us have revenue!"

*

YOU see; the vice of the reasoning is that it starts at a point that is not fixed—another man—other men. There is even an intimation that for himself he would not sell drink. But his normal standard is useless, because he does not stand by it.

*

Clearly, if you adopt the same point from which to reason, you bring up at the same place, and your criticism of the saloon keepers is plain hypocrisy.

*

AND it is safe to say that, if you measure men by single actions and, when

you measure, bear in mind their different ideals, the man who buys whisky and drinks whisky, and sells whisky, is even a better man than is he who would by no means buy it, or use, or sell, but who is none too good to sell the other man a license.

*

Look at that carefully! The saloon keeper sells whisky. Judge him by that alone. The Christian voter signs his petition for a license, or rents him a room, or votes for a license policy, or for a license party, or refrains from voting for party reasons. Judge him by that alone.

Each reasons from the voice of another man. One from the persistent vice of the drinkers, the other from the persistent vice of the sellers. So far, they are on a level.

*

But consider their ideals! The saloon keeper does not pretend to be a "good" man, he does not claim to be a disciple of Jesus, he does not claim to be ready to sacrifice himself for the good of men or the glory of God. He is frankly

and openly for the wrong because there is money in it. Judge him by that.

*

On the other hand, the Christian voter is a man of prayer. He says he is a friend of God. He says he is "all the Lord's." He says he has offered himself a sacrifice for humanity—and been accepted. He says he is converted, sanctified, perhaps. He says he hates sin. He says he has the witness of the spirit. He says he is washed in the blood of the Lamb. He says he is saved. Judge him by that, and by comparison he is unworthy to unloose the other's shoes.

*

A starting point is what we want. Let us go carefully here. There was a time when no lawful saloon existed in this country. One day the idea of one was conceived by a bad man, and he began to put it into execution. Other bad men saw and approved, or said nothing. The voting church forbade the infamous thing as an outrage upon Christian virtue.

The bad man coolly said: "I know you

have virtue, but, what will you take for it?" and we named the figure we would sell for and he took us up at our own offer and bought the virtue and paid for it, and we took the money and sold the virtue and he simply has the usufruct which he fairly purchased, and a man who is a party to the annual re-sale of the public virtue to the saloon keeper, is as to that, no more a Christian than he is, and far less a manly man.

CHAPTER XVI.

PARTI-COLORED PIETY.

"They have given a boy for a harlot, and sold a girl for wine."

ONE of the familiar stupidities of the day is the excuse one often hears from cultured, Christian men, to-wit: that the rank and file of the people are all right but that they are betrayed by their leaders and deceived by their parties. The childishness of it almost dazes one. Think of it! This is a government of the people, by the people, for the people. In the smiles of the people the political leader lives and moves and has his continued being, politically. In the frown of the people, the political leader dies.

The smile is the thing that needs treatment. What can you do? Frown! One and another will join you by and by. There is no other way to do it. Our leaders are of our own making, and scarcely anything meaner could go by the name of Christian citizenship than the spirit which

aids in the elevation of bad men to office and then whines.

*

We have divided ourselves, for convenience and for power, into political parties. It might be better if we had not done so, but we have, and it is now too late probably, to change the system even if we were sure that the party plan is bad.

The functions of our sovereignty are for the most part performed by representatives. Representatives of the people is the theory, and the fact also in a way, but representatives of the party is the working hypothesis and the paramount idea.

Let us not undervalue the men who "do" our statesmanship. What they are, we have sanctioned. Their deterioration could not have gone on against our protest. They could not reasonably be better men with such constituencies. But call to mind any representative of yours—your member of Congress, or of the Assembly, your alderman. He stands for something; or his position, his very life, is representative.

Well, what does he stand for? Re-election, and, speaking broadly, he stands for nothing else. He has "views"—more or less—of policies, and glimpses, possibly, of principles, but the thing he stands for is re-election. But he has no show for that, unless his party wins, and his party cannot win without it can "work" the church and the saloon together at the polls, which at first glance would seem to be impossible—except, perhaps, in times of war or plague or other common and deadly peril. No party can possibly serve those two constituencies equitably. There can be no apportionment of places or powers between them, nor any compromise of interest with honor to either. But the "member" gets re-elected year after year, because the party wins year after year, and year after year the "Bride of Christ" stands at the civic altar and takes the right hand of Hell and repeats after the Boss; "With this 'ring,' I thee wed, and with all my voting power I thee endow."

This is sickening.

*

What does the church get out of it? Absolutely nothing. The ceremony—re-

duced to its lowest terms—is simply an abdication on her part in favor of the saloon. How dare the party treat her so? That is a long story. But the political boss is no empiric, no mere theorist, no enthusiast, no gambler. He takes no chances. His knowledge is of the laboratory. What he knows he knows, and he has learned that to hold the saloon vote he must be true to the saloon, while to hold the church vote he may be false to the church. He has learned beyond a peradventure that if he trifles with the saloon vote he loses it next time while if he trifles with the church vote, he controls it just the same next time.

*

He is not to be condemned, then, for standing by the saloon and laughing at the vaporings of the church. He is not a missionary, but a scientist who studies facts and acts upon them. And it is a matter of the barest common sense for him to guard the element that may be lost easily and to slight that which is sure to be on hand at need. Just as in a chemical laboratory the alcohol is kept in lockers and on shelves—but the coal, in the cellar

and the Christian vote is the coal that the boss shovels into the party furnace, but the alcohol is warmed gently in crystal retorts in an upper room, and this is so, not because the Boss is what he is, but because the saloon vote and the church vote are what they are. If coals had the power at will to be diamonds and did not so choose, it would be paltry and contemptible for them to lie in the bin and complain of the chemist.

*

We are not victims of bossism. We are its sponsors and its friends. "Actions speak louder than words."

Nor is our case any better against the parties. The crime of the party is not assault, but adultery, and the voting church is above the age of consent.

This chronicler did not foresee that he would run into a party this trip, which shows him short sighted. Nevertheless let the way wind, we follow! And indeed it is not only fit but inevitable that fish should have bones and that there should be wax in honey.

*

In contrite confusion betimes, we charge

our political ills to the great parties—a senseless thing. A party stands to win, that is absolutely all. It has no conscience, it is incapable of guilt.

All but a handful of Christian men South are in the Democratic party. What for? To win. To win what? Anything that will keep Southern saloon keepers and thieves, and spoilsmen, and place hunters, and Christian men, and unselfish patriots, and honest business men cohesive enough for party purposes.

What can the church get out of that? There is but one possible way to manipulate that incredible amalgamation, and that is to pander to the worst element who are ready to gamble on disorder, and disappoint the home-loving, hard-working, property-holding classes who hate turmoil and have everything to lose by revolution.

*

In the North the bulk of the voting Christians are in the Republican party. What is that party? An aggregation of ministers and dramsellers, home missionaries and murderers, honest farmers and dive keepers, square dealers and confi-

dence men, school teachers and burglars, associated for a common purpose.

What common purpose can that agglomeration have that would satisfy the Church of Jesus Christ or help her on her way to save the world?

Absolutely nothing is possible to be wrought by that means above the lower limbs of expediency, and the lean, meager, accidental or inscrutable good that may be thrown down by the fermenting hotch pot. But meanwhile, the possible natural and incorrigible output of evil, means treason rampant and anarchy at the end.

Nevertheless the fact remains that such a party is perfectly good enough for the kind of Christian men that it can hold in that solution.

*

Absolutely the only hope of the church is in a new party wherein young men as they come to years and older men as they come to their senses, may cast their strength without the necessity of insulting their mothers and turning their backs upon the voice of conscience. If no such party has as yet been formed, Christian

men must make one and stand by it, win or lose.

The ministers and leaders ought to lead, no doubt, and it would be to the interest of their fame in the long run, if they would do so. But we laymen have no quarrel with them for not leading. They know no more than we the right of it. They know no more than we the wrong of it. They are few at the best. We are many at the worst. We can honor the church. We can honor our own word. We can kill the saloon and though they will not lead, when we go right, they will make haste to follow.

If they would lead, they could not. We would not let them. We do not hire them to lead, and with the exception of a few overwhelming men, the minister who insists on leading, has no pulpit—not for long.

Note this! that in the churches of this country now, are many prohibitionists loyal and honorable, who vote that way unswervingly and let their faith be known year in and out. But the men of their parishes do not follow them as a rule, and the boys follow their fathers. A minister

ought to be strong, and brave, and true, not because he is a leader, but because he is a follower of Jesus Christ, a witness and a man. When God has spoken, to wait on any man is criminal.

CHAPTER XVII.

DIMENSIONS.

"Sow by all waters."

HE went "forth." He had never been to an agricultural college, and did not know much; but he knew enough to feel sure that the land would never go to him—and many a man has gone through a theological seminary without learning that—and to his simple mind the next step in the reasoning, was with his foot.

*

What would you think of a farmer who should go out into his back lot in the spring with a bag of seed about his neck, and mount a stump and call: "I am a sower, I am about to put in my crop. Let all the land that wants to be seeded come and be sown!" He would be thought a more or less harmless lunatic or a mere mountebank, and that, fairly enough.

But that is the precise method we have adopted for seeding down this world to righteousness: "Next Sunday morning, at eleven o'clock, the Reverend Mr. So-and-So will sow. Good music. Strangers welcome." That is the standing advertisement. Not many come, those who do have been planted to death already, so that a grain would practically have no chance even if it lodged in a good place, and the whole bagful of seed is flung upon a square rod of opportunity which already bristles with suffocated little "greens"—like the earth below the spout of elevator.

But this was a man of dimensions. It is impossible to imagine him as a local option prohibitionist voting year after year for righteousness in his own poor little town until it grows so selfish and hide-bound, that a saloon-keeper would starve on that account alone if he should start there, (for it takes a certain amount of breadth, even to drink whisky) all the time in state and national elections voting the sin ticket without a scratch.

O ur Christian citizenship needs nothing more than it needs magnitude of interest and responsibility. The national policy that would hedge us in to trade with each other is enfeebling alike to intellect and conscience, and in the long run tends to poverty.

*

T he arguments against the Hawaiian treaty that were based on our traditional narrowness were unworthy of these times and of this country. We ought to have the Sandwich Islands and Cuba, too, for that matter, if we can have them honorably—even though every native cost us clear money to raise him. The national heart and brain would grow by it.

*

W hat right have we to shut ourselves up between these oceans and say we owe the islands of the sea no obligations and to say that none of ourselves shall buy goods of foreign merchants or fly the Stars and Stripes on ships not built by us? What right have we to expect the blessing of God upon our nasty little local option that in-

cludes a commerce which carries thirty thousand gallons of rum for every missionary to the heathen lands beyond the sea?

CHAPTER XVIII.

DEFINITE SERVICE.

"Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee."

HE went forth to sow." That was logical—for that is what he was—"a sower." Naturally he would not go forth to sit on the fence and watch what the neighbors were doing, for he was not a loafer—nor to kill a man who was working too cheap on the next farm for he was not a walking delegate, nor to observe the wind, for he was not a meteorologist, nor to frighten the birds, for he was no scare-crow, nor to analyze the soil, for he was not a chemist, nor to soar, for he was not a soarer, nor to sell flour, for he was not a merchant.

*

We are here very close to the secret of Christian success. It is a woeful weakness of the church that so many sowers go forth to do something else, to be reapers, or orators, or rich, or suc-

cessful—anything but what they are. The keenest, grimest, finest bit of literature in the Bible—simplicity, history, satire, gentle humor, wit, too, for surely it is most surprising—is this line which gravely narrates that “a sower went forth to sow.”

*

He was not only logical, but definite. The plague of pastors and the delight of politicians is the indefinite good people who fly about like grains of popcorn, but never get anywhere except as some one carries the popper or empties it.

CHAPTER XIX.

QUIETNESS AND CONFIDENCE.

"Study to be quiet—and to do your own business."

HE "sowed." That is what he went forth for.

Sowed broad-cast, free-hand, out of a bag. "Thou shalt take much seed with thee into the field."

*

Sowed! No gouging steel drill apparatus stabbing in the grain and covering it up like a dead dog. He threw it up as God sows the maple seeds, to let the wind blow away the chaff and withered grains, and leave the heavy grains to fall back upon the earth as gently as the pattering of a summer rain to woo the soil, not force it, to trust the wind and sun, and rain, and the chemistry of the ground to do the rest.

*

It is possible to be sturdy and uncompromising but gentle, and the irritable

worker loses more than his patience.

*

A woman, who at the time was hostess to a public speaker, was making a garden. She had had it plowed and mellowed and made into pretty beds, but did the planting with her own hands. She had a long plank crosswise of the garden bed, on which upon her knees she edged back and forth all afternoon, changing the oaken knee-way every trip from side to side.

*

From the "spare room" window the guest watched her until his own back ached and his knees felt as if they were covered with bruises, and he descended finally and joined her, thinking to "visit" with her while she worked. But even before he saw her face, he understood that his purpose was as unsafe as it would be to set off squibs around a barrel of gunpowder. She was angry. The children and the hens had vexed her, and the work was tiresome.

*

She had, in one hand, a sharp stick, twelve inches long or so, and in the other, seeds. With every side-wise hitch

she stuck her wooden dagger into the earth as if she meant to reach its very heart. Once, twice, thrice, and then into each deep wound dropped a lonesome little seed.

It was earnest planting, but slow, hard, almost cruel. Statistics of the yield are not at hand, but it does not help seed to gouge it in.

*

Every man who has ever been a slave of drink, can remember how good people, earnest, busy, determined to do him good, have come to him "with a sharp stick" and pierced him and shoved into the wound a text of Scripture, seeming to say: "Sprout that quick, or be damned." Nothing could be sincerer than the aim. Nothing could be much worse than the means.

*

But that is "the sin which doth so easily beset" a sower. The Reformer wears his heart out against the rock of apathy, and selfishness, and ignorance, until his spirit gets to be a boring, threatening, porcupine thing, hopeless of any winning, and he goes at his audience with

every spine erect; true, and brave, and right in his purpose, but trussed, defeated, destroyed, by his own quills.

*

The present writer well remembers and somewhat profits by, he hopes, having been presented to a splendid audience as "a sharp threshing instrument having teeth."

One may do good, even after such an introduction—and one owes no softness to a hypocrite—of whom the reformer has to deal with not a few. But human judgment is so faulty, and crowds so mixed, that it were well if he could teach himself to doubt the guilt of most, and go upon the presumption that men need light more than scourging.

*

But the reformer has no "corner" on this faulty manner. Mothers thrash their children because they do not forthwith assimilate an admonition. Evangelists almost detest an unresponsive audience. "Let him that is without sin among you, cast the first stone." But this sower sowed.

CHAPTER XX.

EACH AFTER ITS KIND.

"Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

Sowed *what?*
Seed! not almanacs, nor "break-fast food," nor patent flour, nor dollars, nor diamonds. But seed, with something alive in it. God Almighty's endorsement on every sound kernel.

Chaff flies higher and farther and is lighter to carry, but it does not grow. "Cooked stuff" catches the impatient crowd better, but it will not "keep," and it cannot multiply in needy hands.

*

It would be a great thing for the world if good men everywhere would stop running their theological waffle wagons, and sow seed.

The "Word" of God is no better for a sermon than for an election, or a fair. Less statistics and more overt Bible will beat the weeds of the world.

Old as the world is, it is yet in its early spring, and we are sowers, every one, more or less diligent, more or less fortunate, more or less wise. Oh, friend, be careful what you sow!

*

The greatest seed a man can put into the earth is the ballot of a free citizen. The greatest planting a man ever does is when he votes. A Republican ticket, as the case stands now, is a handful of seed—good seed, too, much of it, but foul with the spores of saloons.

*

The Democratic ticket is neither better nor worse in that regard.

To his own master, every one of us standeth or falleth, but from that sowing what crops of drunkards, paupers, idiots, criminals are to spring up in our homes! God help us!

*

But would the crop be different if you had sown clean seed? *Your* crop, yes, indeed! "Thou shalt not sow with mingled seed."

CHAPTER XXI.

THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS.

"The righteous shall hold on his way and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger."

CRITICISM assailed him at every turn. One cried: "Look at the birds!" But he had no time to club the birds—and kept his gait. And as the golden showers fell along the way, perhaps he murmured in his heart: "Behold the fowls of the air, for they toil not, neither do they spin, and yet their heavenly Father feedeth them."

*

ANother shouted: "Think of the east wind," but he was no sail vessel but a man with divine power in himself, and he trudged on, with a sigh, maybe: "He that observeth the wind shall not sow."

*

ANother and another: "Wait till the dew is off; wait till the sun is low:" But he stayed not at all, and in his patient mind the angel of labor may have

whispered: "Sow in the morn thy seed, and at eve withhold not thy hand."

*

Another still: "Consider the thorns!" But he believed that the seed he sowed could hold its own with any tares, or thorns that ever grew, and plodded on.

*

Another derided, saying: "What have you raised? The field is as brown as ever. Show a spear of green if you dare." And he pulled his leathern belt a hole tighter and answered not a word, for he was not an experimenter. It was humble work he did, but sure.

*

And he was no child, that he should stop in his work to dig up grains already planted and "show off" for a vindication. What was he that he should be tempted to try to uncover the hand of God in the ground!

CHAPTER XXII.

THE CROP.

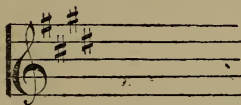
"God giveth the increase."

HE never re-appeared in the history, maybe he died that night in the corner of the stump fence, or fell, worn out, in the last trip across the field as the night was closing down on the grey acre of rocks, and pools, and briars—as yet barren as an ice floe—and as cold, and next day his critics may have said: "That movement was a failure, it is dead." He has no monument, nor any mark upon his grave. Nobody knew nor cared what had become of him—nobody but Jesus Christ.

*

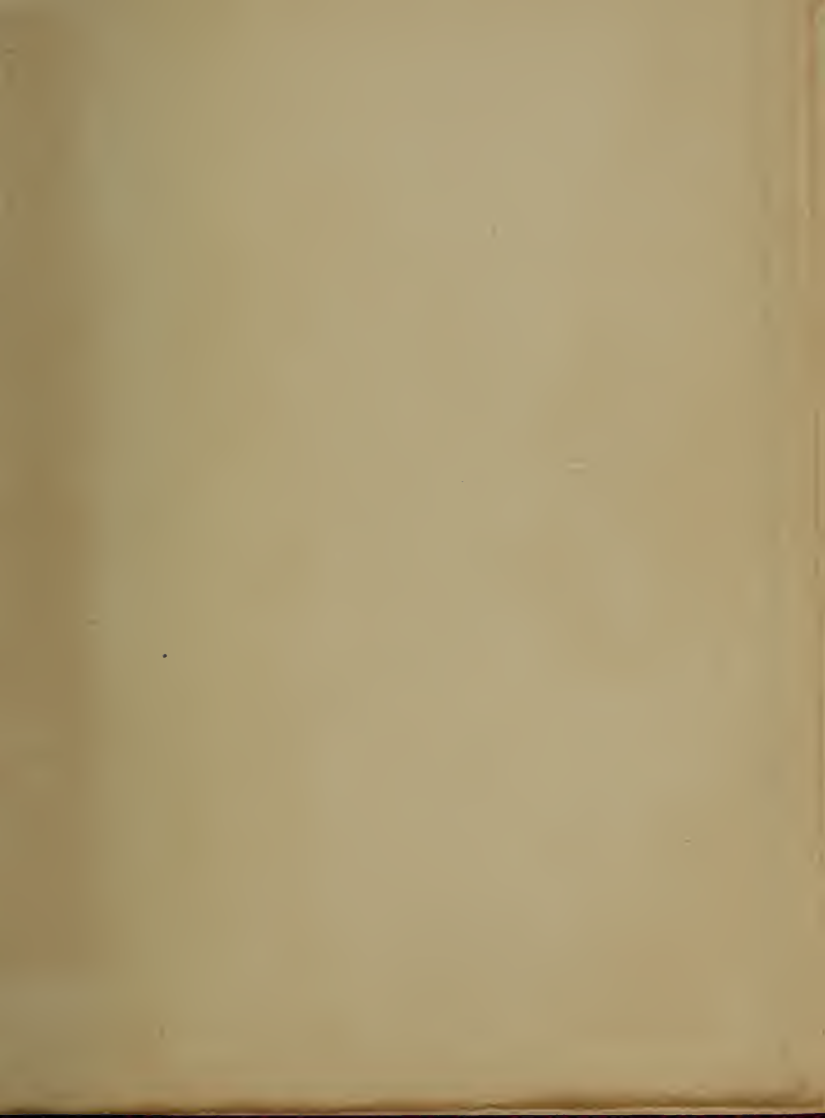
B ut the crop was a good one—thirty, sixty, a hundred fold. And the critics gathered it.

know my hand may never reap its sowing,
But yet some other's may.
And I may never see it growing,
So short my little day.
Still must I sow although I go forth weeping, a
I cannot, dare not, stay.
God grant a harvest, though I may be sleeping
Under the shadows gray.



THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
LIBRARY
540 EAST 57TH STREET
CHICAGO, ILL. 60637
U.S.A.

232
232
232
232
232



Chrisman
Jelssan

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 027 331 632 2